

tle's argument urging the people to pray for one another. He points them back in history to Elias praying earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not for the space of three years and six months. Then he says: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are. The great men of history whom you are wont to glorify and magnify as beings of a superior nature prayed and God answered them; but you are not different; you are the same; they are your types and models; what they were, you can be." The whole inspiration and usefulness of Jewish history depends upon our ability to see it as St. James sees it.

We all know how natural it is for us of the present time to become impressed with deepest reverence for the great and good men of the past; but all the powers by which they effected their purposes were the same as those by which we do our little works. In commemorating their lives we are apt to forget their humanity; we separate their nature from our own, not ascribing to ourselves the same qualities; and it is good for us, when, from the level of our common nature, we can look into their faces, and see that they were men who accomplished their work thru our human breath, and by the same powers we all possess.

They were not beings of superhuman capacities, but only humanity at its highest and best, to be taken as types and models of what it is possible for all of us to become.

The text suggests:

I. The capacity of humanity.

II. The likeness of men to one another.

III. The universal power of religion.

1. We have probably been impressed with some form of the idea that man, as yet, has only begun to use the powers that are in him, that he walks on earth fettered by many limitations. At times, it seems as if humanity had reached the ultimate of its attainment; that its work were indeed finished, when suddenly some man, by his wonderful achievement, opens an endless vista into the range of what man may do. Such revelations are always coming to the world, thru men of great thoughts and deeds. But, looking at the really great characters we have in life—for character is the greatest of all achievements—are we not apt to think of them as exceptions rather than as types, as phenomena rather than as the completest flowers of our race?

The question is whether we shall take the average of humanity, and think of the few men who stand above it as exceptional beings, or whether we shall think of them as the standard bearers of the great advancing army; as the types and prophecies of what shall sometime be the common attainment. The exceptions of one age certainly become the average of the next succeeding, and the next age throws out its own advanced men only to be absorbed in the life that follows. The words of John Milton concerning tolerance in the seventeenth century, were then wonders of sense and wisdom; but they

could not remain exceptional; they were but the prophecies of that which by and by came to be common possessions of all men.

In religion this truth becomes tenfold more important.

The Church has made its multitudes of saints. She sets them upon the pedestal of canonization, points her children to them and consecrates the days to their memory; but almost always it has been some accident or circumstance which has called the world's particular attention to them. Multitudes have lived in perfect obscurity as great and good as those whose names shine upon the calendars. As we come to the days when we celebrate their virtues, we should remember that they were men subject to like passions as we are; but they were selected as illustrating the best and holiest life among Christians, and there is no patience, self-sacrifice or holy life in them that is impossible to us. We are not to clothe them with mystery and worship them as beings of a superior nature. We should recognize in them the faults as well as the virtues that are possible to our humanity, and hold them as examples and patterns both for guidance and warning.

Here lies the chief danger that a man will think that the superior piety of some one, to whom he looks with reverence, is entirely out of his reach, something beyond the range of his capacity. He thinks of the saints as beings of a different order; he asks them to pray for him, and he puts great faith in their prayers; but this is not treating them right; they are but men and women of like passions as we are. They have had to conquer their temptations, overcome their difficulties, and tremble in weakness before they could stand in strength. If they could pray, you can pray; if they had to step up by the Master's side to lead the brave and noble life he led, then, by the same course, and not by clinging to their sainthood, can you go up and become as they are. The line of sainthood superstitiously used has kept men away from God, instead of bringing them to God. But the same thing is going on wherever men forget that the great and good among them are not to be taken as exceptions, but as types and models of all that we may and ought to be. We forget that Christ incarnate was such as we are, and some of us are putting him where he can be no example to us at all. Let no fear of losing the dear, great truth of the divinity of Christ make you lose the dear, great truth of the humanity of Christ. He took upon himself our nature; as a man of like passions, he fought that terrible fight in the wilderness; year by year, as an innocent man, was he persecuted by narrow-hearted Jews; and his was a humanity whose virtue was pressed by all the needs of the multitude, and yet kept its richness of nature; a humanity which, tho given up to death on the cross, expressed all that is within the capacity of our own humanity; and if we really follow him we shall be holy even as he is holy. Belief in his humanity is not strange; it is

really the essence and heart of Christianity. Some dark and groveling doctrines have seemed to say that God could be exalted only by degrading his creatures as low as possible; but there are doctrines which have presented views of an unsullied humanity. The story of the Fall has in its heart the truth of man's capacity; for only a being capable of the Garden can be capable of such a wilderness. No man can know how far he is from God until he has had some vision of himself close to God, held in his arms, pressed to his bosom. To be capable of God, to know that God can fill us with himself, and make us strong in himself, this is the promise of infinity. Looking on into futurity, you cannot begin to see the end of these paths upon which you are now entering; but you can be all you need to be; you can know all you need to know; where other men have gone you can go, and what they have done you can do. Let every good man then be your revelation; let him call to you, tho he must call to you from the other side of the wall which you are going to climb. From the men who have won in this life and passed on we should gather hope and courage.

II. The likeness of men to one another. Every man gains heart and strength as he sees in the world's best characters the type of himself and the picture of his own possibilities. We begin to see in many ways that what one man can do, another can do; but this very broad statement seems to need qualification, for all men surely are not born equal. The inequalities of birth and education, the diversities in moral nature surrounding us on every side, compel us to ask what there is left that is common to all men? What is it that really likens all men to one another? The answer is to be found in that ancient figure of the Bible which represents God as our Father. In a household, or family of children, there are inequalities enough; but there are certain things which they all have in common because they are all members of the same household. One is brave, another is timid; one is prudent, another thoughtless; one is headstrong, another is docile; yet in all their differences of character they are alike in that they have their father's nature and their household rights. Each, while possessing something distinct from the rest, will have those qualities which mark him as a member of that family.

Something like this is the equality of humanity. I cannot claim the power to write a poem, or lead an army, because some singer is making the world listen with delight, or because some soldier is causing it to tremble at his mighty deeds. Man falls short of manhood just in proportion as he lacks those qualities of prayerfulness, reverence and goodness, which correspond to the family nature, and which are the proof-marks of the family of God, in some degree to be found in all his children.

This relation is such that the degree of excellence one brother has attained may be